

But the good news is that: Members of this House from both sides of aisle with conservative to moderate to liberal leanings—are finally beginning to band together to try and reverse the trend to shut down the only specialists we have in this country who are trained to provide care for our sickest and most vulnerable population—senior citizens and others who are disabled and homebound.

I take great pride in having introduced H.R. 4339 last week—a bill calling for a three-year moratorium on the so-called temporary payment (interim) system that has caused home health agencies to fail and patients to be left totally without resources to keep them safe.

The Interim Payment system (IPS) was only supposed to remain in place until HCFA could get the Prospective Payment System in place in October of 1999. The horror is that HCFA has advised Congress that due to circumstances, including HCFA's problem with Y2K considerations—it can't meet the deadline next October.

If HCFA doesn't meet that deadline, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter—the BBA says that when next October 1st rolls around it will automatically trigger a 15 percent reduction in all reimbursements to home health agencies.

I deeply appreciate the bipartisan support my bill, H.R. 4339 has received over the past week, and I encourage those Members who haven't cosponsored it, to do so.

But because of a need to provide a solution to the IPS problem while at the same time guaranteeing budget neutrality—we need not only a moratorium—but also a trigger of our own—a trigger that works on behalf of home health agencies—instead of the built-in trigger that gets pulled next October making matters much worse than they are today.

That is why we have introduced the HERO bill today—the Homebound Elderly Relief Opportunity bill—to provide both a moratorium for immediate relief—and a trigger mechanism for future relief and stability among both agencies and the patients they serve.

This is a bipartisan effort to get something done—something positive and constructive to get home health agencies back on their feet—where they deserved to be—and Medicare patients back into home care programs they rely upon for daily comfort, for physical and mental stability, for the chance to remain at home among loved ones while struggling with the infirmities of old age and disease.

That what this joint effort is about today—my colleague Representative VAN HILLEARY of Tennessee and I—it is our rallying cry for action before this Congress adjourns to help those we are sworn to help—vulnerable people who cannot help themselves—the sickest and most frail population in this country—who depend upon home care and the people who deliver it to them.

We need to do the right thing. I strongly believe the combined moratorium to provide immediate relief, and the trigger mechanism in the HERO bill for future cost effectiveness, is the right thing to do.

LEGISLATION TO RAISE THE MANDATORY RETIREMENT AGE FOR U.S. CAPITOL POLICE OFFICERS FROM 57 TO 60

HON. JAMES A. TRAFICANT, JR.

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 5, 1998

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation to change the mandatory retirement age for U.S. Capitol Police Officers from 57 to 60. I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

As every Member of Congress know, the Capitol Police is one of the most professional and dedicated law enforcement agencies in the country. They perform a vital and important function. The force is blessed to have a large number of experienced and highly competent officers. Unfortunately, every year dozens of officers are forced to leave the force because of the mandatory retirement rule. Many of these officers are in excellent physical condition. More important, they possess a wealth of experience and savvy that is difficult, if not, impossible to replace.

Raising the mandatory retirement age from 57 to 60 will provide the Capitol Police with the flexibility to retain experienced, highly competent and dedicated officers. It will enhance and improve security by ensuring that the force experiences a slower rate of turnover. Please keep in mind that should this legislation become law, Capitol Police officers between the ages of 57 and 60 would still have to meet the standard requirements to remain on the force, including proficiency on the shooting range.

This legislation is a common sense measure that will go a long way in improving and enhancing what is already one of the finest law enforcement agencies in the world. Once again, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 5, 1998

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, August 3, 1998, I was en route back to Washington with family members and missed three roll call votes.

Had I been present, I would have voted "nay" on H.R. 3743 (Roll Call vote 377); I would have voted "aye" on S. J. Res. 54 (Roll Call Vote 388), and I would have voted "aye" on the Shays/Meehan Campaign Finance Reform Substitute, as Amended (Roll Call Vote 379).

SUCCESS OF CARE

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 5, 1998

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, as Congress moves forward on consideration of fiscal year 1999 foreign operations appropriations, it is worth noting a few of the many successes

CARE, one of the world's largest international relief and development organizations, has had in helping the world's poor. Many of CARE's programs are supported by private donations and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Day-long walks for water forced families in Mozambique to set priorities for water use. Drinking and cooking ranked ahead of washing hands and taking baths. CARE worked with communities to identify health problems related to water and sanitation needs. As a result CARE's Community Water and Sanitation Project was designed to dig wells and install water pumps close to where people lived. Now mothers and children can walk to the nearest pump in minutes and health has improved because of the availability of clean water.

Six years ago, the region had 138 functioning water stations with more than 1,800 people using each. Five years later, the region had 372 water stations, each serving approximately 840 people. As of November 1997, 97 percent of the pumps installed were functioning satisfactorily.

In Ecuador, CARE's SUBIR Project is working with Chachi Indians living in and around the Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve and the Yasuni National Park. For years, the country's timber companies have harvested lumber from these protected areas, stripping the land of all vegetation, leaving behind unusable, depleted soil and harming wildlife habitat. Further, the Chachi Indians have gained little or no income from the trees that populate their land. CARE's work is helping preserve the environment and increase the incomes of the indigenous people of the Reserve and National Park. They include working with the Government of Ecuador to obtain land titles to 35,000 hectares for the Chachi, teaching sustainable forest management and negotiating fair lumber prices with the timber companies.

The value organizations like CARE cannot be emphasized enough. Their efforts play an integral role in development assistance worldwide. These programs show how public-private partnerships between the U.S. Government, host country governments, private U.S. citizens and businesses can help others build a better future.

TRIBUTE TO JOSEPH LUBRANO

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 5, 1998

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Joseph Lubrano, the United States Postal Service (USPS) Brooklyn Postmaster. Joseph was promoted to the position of Brooklyn Postmaster in December of 1997 from his prior position of Officer-in-Charge, Brooklyn Post Office.

I wish to commend Joseph for his efforts in vastly improving the quality of postal service in the borough of Brooklyn. Joseph has expanded passport acceptance services in the Brooklyn post offices, encouraged station managers to meet and greet customers in their stations, and increased hours of operation in Brooklyn post offices and substations. His initiatives and responsiveness has improved customer relations between postal patrons and the USPS.

Joseph has served twenty years with the USPS. Within three years of his induction to the USPS, he was promoted to a supervisory position. Joseph has held numerous positions in customer services, including Delivery and Collection Supervisor; General Supervisor of City Delivery; Station Manager; Manager of Delivery and Collection; Manager of Stations and Branches; Area Manager; Postmaster of Far Rockaway; Senior Manager of Post Office Operations in Westchester, New York; and various details at USPS Headquarters and in the New York area.

A product of Brooklyn, New York, Joseph grew up in the New Lots neighborhood of Brooklyn. He attended Public School 171, Thomas Edison High School, and graduated from St. Johns University.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I pay tribute to Joseph Lubrano for his commitment and dedication to ensuring quality service to the people of Brooklyn from the United States Postal Service.

HELP EXPAND INSURANCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO DEFEND OUR NATION

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 5, 1998

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I have introduced the Veterans' Life Insurance Opportunity Act of 1998 (H.R. 4115) to increase the accessibility of the Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) program to men and women of our Armed Forces following their separation from active duty.

Active duty service members, unless they decline coverage, automatically participate in the Servicemen's Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program. This coverage expires following their discharge from the Armed Forces.

Under current law, veterans have only four months to convert directly from SGLI to the VGLI program. Then they have an additional 12 months to apply for VGLI if they can provide medical proof of insurability. Following this brief time period, veterans have no other opportunities to enroll in VGLI.

How many veterans, who are in transition from military to civilian life, busy relocating themselves and their families, finding housing, returning to school, and working hard to enter and advance themselves in the civilian workforce, are also thinking of life insurance needs? Many are young and have not yet thought of their future beyond the military. The deadlines for conversion are missed because of the many more immediate issues that newly-separated veterans are facing.

Then, a couple of years go by, and the veteran realizes the importance of life insurance. By that time, it is too late!

My bill, the Veterans' Life Insurance Opportunity Act, provides a reasonable and more realistic level of flexibility for our veterans who want coverage under the VA life insurance program. It would allow two years following their date of discharge to convert from SGLI to VGLI. Additionally, a second opportunity to make the conversion would be provided five years after their date of discharge from military service.

Who, in our country, deserves and needs life insurance more than anyone else? This may be a hard question to answer, and indeed, our answers may vary. But high on the list, I believe, must be our veterans.

I urge my colleagues to expand insurance opportunities for veterans. Please support and co-sponsor H.R. 4115.

INTRODUCTION OF THE BIOMASS ENERGY EQUITY ACT OF 1998

HON. WALLY HERGER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 5, 1998

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, today I join with my colleague Mr. MATSUI and our cosponsors—Mr. ENSIGN, Mr. MCCRERY, Mr. McDERMOTT, Mrs. THURMAN, Mr. SMITH of Oregon, Mr. POMBO, Mr. HUNTER, Mr. DOOLEY, Mr. GIBBONS, and Mr. BLUMENAUER—to announce the introduction of "The Biomass Energy Equity Act of 1998," legislation that will help sustain the economic and environmental benefits provided to the public by the biomass power industry in the United States.

The biomass power industry is a unique source of renewable electricity. It generates electricity by combusting wood waste and other non-hazardous, organic materials under environmentally-controlled conditions as an alternative to disposal or open-incineration of these materials. In effect, the biomass power industry makes constructive use of waste materials that would otherwise become a public liability.

Mr. Speaker, the organic materials used as fuel by this industry are gathered from the agricultural and forest-related sectors of our economy and from our urban waste streams. In addition to the jobs that are generated by this activity, a range of quantifiable benefits arise: the risk and severity of forest fires is diminished, air pollution from open burning of agricultural residues is avoided, and landfill space is preserved. In the absence of this \$7 billion per year industry, the nation would face a series of negative consequences above and beyond the loss of the renewable electricity itself.

Congress recognized the importance of the biomass power industry when it enacted a biomass energy production tax credit in 1992. Unfortunately, the production tax credit provided by this code section—due for expiration within a year—has never been accessible to the biomass power industry due to excessively narrow drafting. Our legislation corrects this defect in order to recognize and retain the public benefits, including the national security and system reliability benefits, of this important industry.

Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that this is a "good government" issue whose clear merits and environmental benefits transcend partisan and regional politics, and I would urge all of my colleagues—on both sides of the aisle—to cosponsor this important and much-needed legislation.

CIGARS ARE NO SAFE ALTERNATIVE ACT OF 1998

HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 5, 1998

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Cigars Are No Safe Alternative Act of 1998.

Mr. Speaker, available scientific evidence demonstrates that regular cigar smoking causes a variety of cancers including cancers of the lip, tongue, mouth, throat, esophagus, larynx, and lung. That same evidence demonstrates that heavy cigar smokers and those who inhale deeply are at increased risk of coronary heart disease and can develop chronic lung disease. Despite these serious and deadly health risks, cigar use is up dramatically in the United States over the last five years: small cigar consumption has increased by an estimated 13%, large cigars by 70%, and premium cigars by a whopping 250%. Teenagers are a fast-growing market for these deadly tobacco products. In fact, data from the Centers for Disease Control's 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicate that among high school students, over 30 percent of the males and 10 percent of the females are current cigar smokers.

Mr. Speaker, cigars are not a safe alternative to cigarettes. Compared to a cigarette, nicotine yields for cigars are 9 to 12 times greater; tar yields 2 to 3 times greater; and large cigars emit 20 times more ammonia, and up to 10 times as much other cancer causing agents.

In order to drive home the message that smoking cigars is not a safe alternative to smoking cigarettes, I am introducing the Cigars Are No Safe Alternative Act of 1998. The CANSA Act will prohibit the sale and distribution of cigars to any individual who is under the age of 18. It will directly impose restrictions on the sale and advertising of cigars directed at youth, and eliminate cigar advertising on electronic media. It will encourage cigar manufacturers to end the practice of paying for, or participating in cigar product placements in movies and on television where a substantial segment of the viewing audience is under the age of 18. And it will direct the FDA to require warning labels on cigars to warn cigar users about the health risks presented by cigars.

Mr. Speaker, the CANSA Act will also require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct a study on the health effects of occasional cigar smoking, nicotine dependence among cigar smokers, biological uptake of carcinogenic constituents of cigars, and environmental cigar smoke exposure. It will require the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to report to Congress on the sales, marketing, and advertising practices associated with cigars. And in addition, the Secretary, acting in cooperation with the FDA, the FTC, and the Department of Treasury, shall be required to monitor trends in youth access to, and use of, cigars and notify Congress of the results.

Mr. Speaker, if and when Congress does act to reduce teen smoking, we must send the unambiguous message to children and adolescents that cigars are no safe alternative to